

PUBLIC

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UA 160/09 Arbitrary arrest/prisoner of conscience

IRAN Abdolfattah Soltani (m), lawyer, human rights defender

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Lawyer and human rights defender Abdolfattah Soltani was arrested on 16 June and his whereabouts are unknown. The reasons for his arrest are not known but are likely to be in connection with the current events in Iran. Amnesty International believes that Abdolfattah Soltani is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Abdolfattah Soltani was arrested at his office in central Tehran, at around four in the afternoon, on 16 June by four plain-clothed security officials. The officials, who did not have a search warrant; a summons or arrest warrant, carried out a search of his office. They confiscated his files, his briefcase; his computers and his mobile phone before taking him away.

Abdolfattah Soltani is a member of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), which Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Shirin Ebadi and many other leading human rights activists founded in 2002. It was forcibly closed in December 2008 shortly before the centre was to hold an event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The CHRD, whose members continue to work under the name of the centre, has three stated roles: reporting violations of human rights in Iran; providing free legal representation to political prisoners; and supporting the families of political prisoners.

Abdolfattah Soltani wanted to stand for election to the Central Bar Association's Board in 2008, but his candidacy was rejected on grounds of "unsuitability".

Abdolfattah was arrested in 2005 and spent 219 days in detention, of which 43 were in solitary confinement. In 2006 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for 'disclosing confidential documents', for which he received a sentence of four years; and one year's imprisonment for 'propaganda against the system'. On 28 May 2007, he was acquitted of all charges brought against him since his arrest in July 2005. Since then he has been banned from travelling outside Iran, including in order to collect awards in recognition of his human rights work.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the days following the Iranian presidential election on 12 June, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took part in marches and demonstrations across the country, condemning both the process and outcome of the election.

Most of the demonstrations have been non-violent but in some cases violence erupted, including stone throwing and acts of arson. The police and security forces have used excessive force, including beating and clubbing with truncheons, to control some of the demonstrations. Hundreds have been arrested during the demonstrations against the outcome of the elections, although many may have been released.

Amnesty International has recorded at least 10 killings, of which eight have been confirmed by state media. At least four students are currently unaccounted for following an attack on their dormitory in Tehran - the authorities must urgently investigate their fate, and all reported killings.

At least 200 politicians, journalists, academics, students and human rights defenders have been detained, some briefly, across Iran since the election. Shiva Nazar Ahari, a human rights defender, and member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters, was arrested from her home on 14 June in Tehran by security forces who searched her house and took some of her personal possessions.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Abdolfattah Soltani, who appears to have been arrested solely on account of his peaceful views, including in relation to the election held on 12 June, as they are prisoners of conscience;
- urging that he be allowed immediate access to family members, a lawyer of his choice and to any medical treatment he may require, and that he be protected from all forms of torture or ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to allow peaceful demonstrations to take place of those who wish to express their opinions on the elections.

**APPEALS TO:**

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Office of the Supreme Leader

Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email:** [info\\_leader@leader.ir](mailto:info_leader@leader.ir)

**via website:** <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email:** [shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir) (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 July 2009.